

Creating Sanctuary

Prayer and Reflections Facilitators Guide



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Purpose of the Resource

This resource is designed to help people think through the experience of being an LGBT+ person in our churches. To many LGBT+ people, churches don't feel safe and some of our LGBT+ community have experienced harm in our churches. Our LGBT+ siblings long to be accepted as part of the family.

We recognise that people have different views on same sex relationships. This resource is not intended to ask all members of the Body of Christ to think alike. It is intended to provide a framework in which we can share our thoughts, our feelings, and our spiritual discernment with each other, in safe and respectful dialogue. This resource aims to facilitate that process. It is not intended to address the theological views that lie behind different convictions. Rather, it is designed to help people be pastorally sensitive towards everyone, LGBT+ people included.

It is intended to hold us all to account for how we communicate, recognising the impact and affect we can have, and the damage we can cause, when we do so without love.

This Resource benefits from strong facilitation. If you do not have individuals with suitable facilitation skill or experience in your community, please contact us on to access bespoke facilitator training via:

- The Mint House in Oxford
- OneBodyOneFaith in London
- The Blackley Centre for Peace and Dialogue, Elland, West Yorkshire

You can find out more at:

www.creatingsanctuary.org.uk/training

The methodology underpinning this resource is intentionally designed using a restorative framework; working 'with' each other, not doing 'to' or 'for', to enable all perspectives to be heard. It also encourages us to think about the impact and effect of our expressions of those views, as they translate into behaviours, to be carefully considered.

As we talk and reflect together in community, we recognise that this discussion may engender strong thoughts and feelings. It is likely to be helpful to encourage all participants to find a way to express these e.g. through keeping a journal or using creative arts, thereby providing a space to process thoughts and feelings.

Note on Prayer and reflection times

Within the material there are moments, usually at the end of each session, for reflection and prayer. The exception to this is Session 3 where a prayer response time forms a central place in the session. These prayer times are designed to help create calm by centring the group's thoughts on some words of Jesus, heard from the cross.

- **Session 1**
"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." LUKE 23:34
- **Session 2**
"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." LUKE 23:43
- **Session 3:**
- *"I thirst"* JOHN 19: 28
- **Session 4**
"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" MATTHEW 27:46 & MARK 15:34
- **Session 5**
"I thirst." JOHN 19:28
- **Session 6**
"It is finished" (or "It is accomplished", or "It is complete") JOHN 19:30 and *"Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."* LUKE 23:46

The same sequence is followed each time:

1. Words From the Cross

2. Pause to Reflect

3. Prayer

We have provided prayers that we feel would be helpful within this context. However, these are not prescriptive and we encourage you to use this space as you feel led. In order to keep within the session time, try to keep the closing prayers to between five and ten minutes.

4. Closing Song

We have also provided suggestions for songs that will help bring your meeting to a close. These can be sung as a congregation, read aloud, or listened to - should you have the means.

To begin the period of *Prayers Around the Cross*, the facilitator could place tee lights on the floor in the shape of the cross, lighting them to mark the start of the prayer time. Alternatively, you could invite each participant to light a candle and place it on the floor, together forming the shape of the cross.

Whether you use the resources suggested or opt for a more free-style of prayer it is good to follow the same pattern each time. In order to keep within the session time, try to keep the closing prayers between 5 and 10 minutes.

If you run some of the sessions together, you may wish to select one or other of the prayer resources offered, or, draw selectively from both while holding to the "Prayers Around the Cross" pattern.

Further resources can be found in *Appendix 1*.

Ground Rules

'A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.'

JOHN 13:34-35

As a community of people, we want to demonstrate the following Godly behaviours

- Love
- Respectful Curiosity
- Active Listening
- Empathy
- Creativity
- Hope

Ground Rules

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people may be in the room. Their experiences will be treated with care and met with love.
- Many LGBT people in Christian communities have experienced harm. We acknowledge the imbalance of power and privilege that has led to this. Their voices will be given additional respect.
- We will listen carefully to each other, with respect, allowing all views to be heard, without interruption and consciously not speaking or behaving in a way that causes further harm to LGBT+ sisters and brothers.
- We will seek to be genuine and honest.
- What we say in this room is confidential, details are not for sharing without agreement.
- We will be respectful. We will exercise grace.
- We will be careful with our language and recognise that we will sometimes hurt each other without meaning to. Your intention is not always your impact, but it's the impact of our words that can cause hurt and create 'unsafe' experiences.
- If in doubt, respectfully ask for clarification.
- If something challenges you, embrace the challenge and try and learn from it.
- If you feel unsafe or distressed at any time, it is important to leave the room, we will make sure someone is on hand to talk about what's happened and how you're feeling.
- We will maintain confidentiality. We will not discuss information about other people without their informed consent. What we discuss together today, remains confidential.

A Covenant Prayer: For Creating Sanctuary Together

This prayer seeks to nurture sanctuary by embedding the *Ground Rules* that have been agreed together, into a covenant prayer. You are encouraged to use it in the first session at the point when the rules are agreed and thereafter as an opening prayer at the start of each session.

Gracious God

Under the shadow of your wings

We find welcome embrace and compassionate love,

And in the coming of your son amongst us,

We encounter the outstretched arms of Love without limits.

Help us to be your covenant people

Reaching out to one another

As Christ has reached out to us.

As we journey together

Help us

To be treated with care

And met with love

To listen to the voices of those least heard

And encourage all views to be respected

To seek to be genuine and honest

And not speak in ways that cause harm

To hold each other's stories in confidence

And exercise grace in our words and actions

When disturbed or confused,

To seek understanding

When challenged or moved

To embrace the learning

Help us on this journey to be strangers no longer,

But pilgrims on the way

For the sake of Jesus

Who walks with us,

breaks bread for us to share,

and opens our eyes.

AMEN



Session 1: Prayers Around the Cross

- > Create a cross from tee lights or distribute a candle to each participant

To begin the period of *Prayers Around the Cross*, the facilitator could place tee lights on the floor in the shape of the cross, lighting them to mark the start of the prayer time. Alternatively, you could invite each participant to light a candle and place it on the floor, together forming the shape of the cross.

1. Words From the Cross



- > S1:13

Jesus said: “Woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.”

JOHN 19:26-27

Jesus’ words to his mother and the beloved disciple show the deep affection in which he held them. Here is covenant love in action: Jesus’ mother and the beloved disciple stood by Jesus in his darkest hour of suffering and rejection, while at the same time Jesus reached out to them, through his pain, urging them always to be there for one another.

2. *Pause to Reflect*

To quietly reflect and meditate on covenant love, what it means to be constantly opening ourselves to God and one another, use this exercise based on an ancient prayer from the Book of Hours (1514)



> **S1:14-15**

God be in my head and in my understanding

(How have we understood, what has enabled us to form these understandings)

God be in my eyes and in my looking

(What have we seen? Lord, enable us to look again)

God be in my mouth and in my speaking

(What have I said, have I kept silent when I should have spoken out?)

God be in my heart and in my thinking

(What thoughts, stories, feelings do I carry in my heart that need to be re-visited?)

God be at my end, and at my departing.

(God in all of life ...my life always).

3. *Prayer*

Please feel free to either use the following prayer by Francis of Assisi (1181- 1226) or invite free prayer to commend one another to God.



> **S1:16-1**

God our maker

Each day is a little life

Each night a tiny death

Help us to live with faith and hope and love

Lift our duty above drudgery

*Let not our strength fail, or vision fade
In the heat and burden of the day.*

*Make us patient one with another
In the fret and jar of life,
Remembering that each fights a hard fight
And walks a lonely way.*

*Forgive us Lord,
If we hurt one another.*

*Teach us a gentler tone, a sweeter
charity of words
And a more healing touch.*

*Sustain us, O God, when we must face
sorrow;
Give us courage for the day and hope
for the morrow.*

*Day by day , may we hold your hand
and look up into your face,
Whatever befall,
Until our work is finished and the day
is done.*

AMEN

4. Closing Song

The Servant Song by Richard A. M. Gillard reflects the practice in God's Covenant community of supporting each other.



> S1:19-21

*Brother sister let me serve you
Let me be as Christ to you.
Pray that I might have the grace
To let you be my servant, too.*

*We are pilgrims on a journey.
Sisters, brothers, on the road*

*We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.*

*I will hold the Christ-light for you
In the night-time of your fear.
I will hold my hand out to you;
Speak the peace you long to hear.*

*I will weep when you are weeping.
When you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey through.*

*When we sing to God in heaven,
We shall find such harmony
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.*

*When we sing to God in heaven,
We shall find such harmony
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.*



Session 2: Prayers Around the Cross

- > Create a cross from tee lights or distribute a candle to each participant

After the *Checking In* time has allowed thoughts and feelings to be expressed, bring the group around the cross for a short time of prayer. The facilitator may wish to place tee lights in the shape of the cross on the floor and light them at the start of this section or invite participants to light a candle each, together make the sign of the cross.

1. Words From the Cross



- > S2:19

“Today you will be with me in paradise.” LUKE 23:43

From the cross Christ offers grace and comfort to an outsider.

2. Pause to Reflect



> S2:20-22

What does mean today, for the harmed and the hurting to hear these words:

“Today you shall be with me in paradise.”

*In the pain of rejection
Under the scrutiny of a graceless world
In the night-time of my fear*

*Jesus’ words
are balm to my brokenness*

*When doubt and disappointment overshadow me
fear and uncertainly consume me
and friends no longer hear me*

*Jesus’ words
calm my restlessness*

*When who I am is not understood
or what I feel is not acknowledged
When the body I inhabit is not loved*

*Jesus’ words
restore my humanity*

*Wherever the body of Christ
Binds the wounds of the broken
Comforts the restless
Rescues and restores the rejected*

*Jesus’ promise
comes alive - Paradise Now*

3. Prayer

Offer this prayer for one another and for those whose stories have been shared.
Alternatively, invite the group to pray spontaneously.



> S2:23-24

*Gracious God,
We have listened to the stories,
We have heard the pain caused by silence and indifference.*

*Help us to find the boldness to break our silences,
To speak truth to power,
To make the space so that voices within our community are heard,
So we too can better reflect your love and welcome to all.*

*On the cross ,
Even through your pain and discomfort,
You reached out to offer hope and life to others.*

*Give us courage and grace to exchange out judgements and prejudices,
For your gracious love and compassion.*

AMEN

4. Closing song

This song by Marty Haugen reflects the practice in God's Covenant community of welcoming all.



> S2:25-28

*Here in this place, new light is streaming,
Now is the darkness vanished away.
See, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,
Brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in - the lost and forsaken,
Gather us in - the blind and the lame.
Call to us now, and we shall awaken,
We shall arise at the sound of our name.*

*We are the young - our lives are a mystery,
we are the old - who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of history,
Called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in - the rich and the haughty,
Gather us in - the proud and the strong.
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
Give us the courage to enter the song.*

*Here we will take the wine and the water,
Here we will take the bread of new birth.
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
Call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
Give us to eat the bread that is you.
Nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
Lives that are holy and hearts that are true.*

*Not in the dark of buildings confining,
Not in some heaven, light years away,
But here in this place, the new light is shining;
Now is the Kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in - and hold us forever,
Gather us in - and make us your own.
Gather us in - all peoples together,
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.*



Session 3: Prayers Around the Cross

Note: Prayer and reflection takes place at the beginning and the end of this session)

- > **Create a cross from tee lights or distribute a candle to each participant**

As in previous weeks, after the *Checking In* time has allowed thoughts and feelings to be expressed, bring the group around the cross for a short time of prayer. The facilitator may wish to place tee lights in the shape of the cross on the floor and light them at the start of this section or invite participants to light a candle each, together make the sign of the cross.



1. Words from the Cross

- > **S3:5**

"I thirst" JOHN 19:28

2. Pause and Reflect



> S3:6-8

Facilitator to decide whether to read to the group or read together

*We thirst!
All of us thirst;
For recognition, friendship, inclusion; truth.*

*We thirst,
all of us thirst;
For authenticity, acceptance, understanding;
for permission to be who we wholly are.*

*It is our basic need,
A fundamental requirement of humanity.
To be fully seen.*

*Lord, when you were thirsty, they mocked you,
It may have appeared to those standing by that they met your need,
Yet what you were offered was not what you needed,
it would never have been enough.*

God, we thirst.

*In a world often parched and arid from a lack of authenticity and welcome,
Where often we too have failed to meet the needs of the other
We too have wanted to be seen to serve,
We too have caused insult, offering a second-rate solution.*

*God, we thirst,
all of us thirst,
From our need for others,*

*Our need for you,
Our need for love.*

3. A Prayer for Discernment



- > Show slide 3:9 and read to the group

As we share our stories

May the Spirit quench our thirst for truth and understanding

May the crucified and risen Lord meet us in our need

*May God at work in lives so different from our own,
kindle within us a deep love and friendship for all*

AMEN

Prayer & Reflection - Active Response

- > Group activity

- Gather again around the cross on the floor or table.
- Invite participants to write down the initials of those who have brought us insight into the discussion about LGBT+ experiences.
- Invite participants to place those initials around the cross.
- Enter into a time of silence.
- Invite people to write their own names and for those to be added around the cross
- Call all participants to gather around the cross and join in prayer. You may choose to read the following prayer to the group or, using the available slides, invite others to join you.



- > Slide S3:11

*Around the Cross of Christ, we stand together,
Here is a place of grace,
where we realise that we are all in need of Jesus
Here is the great leveller,
Where the broken find healing,
Where the lost are found
Where the outcast is welcomed
The place where love, mercy, and hope abound.
Here we stand, never alone, always with others,
Others just like us, in need of Jesus.*

- > Facilitator to read:

"No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is brought to perfection in us." 1 JOHN 4:12



Session 4: Prayers Around the Cross

- > Create a cross from tee lights or distribute a candle to each participant

As in previous weeks, after the *Checking In* time has allowed thoughts and feelings to be expressed, bring the group around the cross for a short time of prayer. The facilitator may wish to place tee lights in the shape of the cross on the floor and light them at the start of this section or invite participants to light a candle each, together make the sign of the cross.

1. Words From the Cross



- > S4:19

Jesus said: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." LUKE 23:34

Jesus' words to his mother and the beloved disciple show the deep affection in which he held them. Here is covenant love in action: Jesus' mother and the beloved disciple stood by Jesus in his darkest hour of suffering and rejection, while at the same time Jesus reached out to them, through his pain, urging them always to be there for one another.

2. Pause to Reflect

Jesus had compassion on the crowd. There were many groups in the crowd, but the text does not differentiate between them. We must assume that the Gospel writer has each group in focus: soldiers, Roman rulers, Jewish religious leaders, friends and disciples. They were all, in different ways, acting out of ignorance and prejudice. To each, Jesus offers empathy and forgiveness. How does this text speak into this session's discussion? For example, you have just highlighted points of learning: how do these points of learning connect with Jesus prayer?

Take a moment now as individuals to offer up to God in prayer what you have discovered. Then as a group, take time to acknowledge the need for empathy with those who suffer rejection and the desire for reconciliation with God and those who, on first reaction, we want to reject or exclude .

3. *Prayers for forgiveness and reconciliation*

Invite the group to read these prayers silently or choose one to read aloud. You may also like to invite spontaneous prayer where it seems helpful.



> Prayer 1: Slide S4:20

O Holy God, we know we have fallen short.

We turn our backs when we could embrace.

We remain silent when we could speak.

We speak when we could listen.

We close the door when we could fling it wide open.

We judge when we could seek understanding.

We cling when we could give.

*Forgive us, O God, for being so very human at times,
and help us to continue to grow into the people you created us to be,
through Christ our Lord.*

AMEN



> Prayer 2: Slide S4:21

Great and gracious God,

For apathy,

For meanness,

For boredom,

For pride,

For judgment,

For dismissal:

*For all those ways we hurt you by hurting each other and ourselves, forgive us. Turn
us around to you; heal us, and make us whole, we pray.*

AMEN



> Prayer 3: Slide S4:22

There are times, O God, when our greatest sin is not what we do but what we fail to do. For those times when we have not spoken up; for those times when we have not acted; for those times when we have not responded: forgive us.

Give us courage to name what is wrong when we see it.

Give us confidence to do what is hard.

Give us grace to reach out when that is frightening or uncomfortable.

This we pray in Jesus' name.

AMEN

> Prayer 4: Slide S4:23

Holy God, we are an imperfect people and we need your love.

Forgive us when we ignore your children who cry out in distress.

Forgive us when we choose not to see those who frighten us, or those who bother us, or those who remind us too much of ourselves.

Forgive us when we put rules ahead of people and choose legality over kindness and judgment that lacks mercy.

Enable us to see as you see, the wide vistas open to the possibility of compassion and grace.

AMEN

4. Closing Song

In Christ Alone, by Keith Getty & Stuart Townend, could be played to bring the prayers to a close or after the session to remind people of the focus of the cross on forgiveness and reconciliation.



> S4:24-27

*In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand.*

*In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live.*

*There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.*

*No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.*



Session 5: Prayers Around the Cross

- > Create a cross from tee lights or distribute a candle to each participant

As in previous weeks, after the *Checking In* time has allowed thoughts and feelings to be expressed, bring the group around the cross for a short time of prayer. The facilitator may wish to place tee lights in the shape of the cross on the floor and light them at the start of this section or invite participants to light a candle each, together make the sign of the cross.

1. Words From the Cross



- > S5:10

Jesus said: "My God My God why have you forsaken me" MATTHEW 27:46 & MARK 15:34

2. Pause to Reflect

This cry comes from a place of deep darkness when Jesus went to the limits of human suffering and felt the pain of separation, human and divine. Because he journeyed into the darkness, to a place of deep loneliness, we know we are never alone in our suffering. The community of the church is called, under the shadow of the cross, to be a safe sanctuary, offering Christ's compassion and healing to hurting and broken lives.

3. Prayer



> S5:11-12

*Help us O God
To build safer spaces
In your church
and in the community*



*Open our eyes to the needs of those who are vulnerable
- the neglected
- the bruised
- the misjudged*

*Open our ears
to the stories Less often heard
about how people live
And kindle in us through the story of salvation
Such love grace and generosity of spirit
As Christ has shown toward us.
Let Christ's cry from the cross not be in vain
Let no-one, because of the church, feel abandoned or forsaken.*

4. Closing Song

Read together or listen to these song lyrics. As you do, reflect quietly on the Church's calling to create sanctuary and to practice hospitality. Where is the challenge here for your church?



> Available on slides 5:13-15

*Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,
A place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions:*

All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

*Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true,
Where all God's children dare to seek to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness and as symbol of God's grace;
Here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:*

*Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat:
A banquet hall on holy ground where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus, is revealed in time and space;
As we share in Christ the feast that frees us.*

All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.



Session 6: Prayers Around the Cross

- > **Create a cross from tee lights or distribute a candle to each participant**

As in previous weeks, after the *Checking In* time has allowed thoughts and feelings to be expressed, bring the group around the cross for a short time of prayer. The facilitator may wish to place tee lights in the shape of the cross on the floor and light them at the start of this section or invite participants to light a candle each, together make the sign of the cross.

1. Words From the Cross



- > **S6:7**

Jesus said... “It is finished” JOHN 19:30 (or “It is accomplished”, or “It is complete”)

Jesus said... “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit” LUKE 23:46

2. Pause to Reflect

These final words suggest that at the cross there is both closure and yet more to be done in God’s work among us.

Where this journey together as a group has led to new understanding and greater clarity, take time to celebrate and to give God thanks.

Where questions have led to new questions rather than to easy answers, commit these to God and commend your spirit into God’s care, trusting in God to lead you further in your thinking and discerning.

3. Pause to Reflect



- > Invite free prayer beginning with either of the next two phrases
S6:8

"I thank you God for fresh insight and understanding ..."

"I ask you God for wisdom and discernment ..."

4. Closing Song

We return to song lyrics used in Session 2 because they sum up our whole journey. Here are words of assurance and hope that in God's time a new dawn will rise and the Son will reign. Until that time, when all will be gathered, the church will sing praises to God and celebrate the signs of God's kingdom already in the here and now.



- > S6:9-12

- > *Here in this place, new light is streaming,
Now is the darkness vanished away.
See, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,
Brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in - the lost and forsaken,
Gather us in - the blind and the lame.
Call to us now, and we shall awaken,
We shall arise at the sound of our name.*

*We are the young - our lives are a mystery,
we are the old - who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of history,
Called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in - the rich and the haughty,
Gather us in - the proud and the strong.
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
Give us the courage to enter the song.*

*Here we will take the wine and the water,
Here we will take the bread of new birth.
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
Call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
Give us to eat the bread that is you.
Nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
Lives that are holy and hearts that are true.*

*Not in the dark of buildings confining,
Not in some heaven, light years away,
But here in this place, the new light is shining;
Now is the Kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in - and hold us forever,
Gather us in - and make us your own.
Gather us in - all peoples together,
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.*